

VZCZCXRO6534
OO RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHJO RUEHRN
DE RUEHMR #0194 1821536
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O P 301536Z JUN 08
FM AMEMBASSY MASERU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3746
INFO RUCNSAD/SADC COLLECTIVE
RUEHMR/AMEMBASSY MASERU 4165

UNCLAS MASERU 000194

SIPDIS

DEPT ALSO FOR AF/S, DS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [ASEC](#) [LT](#)

SUBJECT: LESOTHO: TAXI STRIKE COMMENCES PEACEFULLY

REF: MASERU 188 AND PREVIOUS

¶1. On Monday June 30, a nationwide taxi strike commenced in Lesotho and was widely observed by minibuses and taxi operators. Maseru's downtown business and retail establishments, however, were mixed in their observation of the protest action. Crowded GOL-operated buses, the source of the taxi community's ire, transported many residents to work, especially government employees and factory workers. Although commercial and public offices opened late, many services were functioning normally by mid-day, including the majority of textile factories. There were reports that at least some intra-city taxi services outside of Maseru operated in defiance of the strike.

¶2. While organizers had called on the general public to observe the June 30 through July 3 period as a general strike, Basotho in large numbers crowded pedestrian paths to walk to and from work locations. A complete lack of taxis in central Maseru and a heavy security presence at intersections were the only evidence of current tensions related to the transportation dispute between taxi owners and the GOL. There were no reports of violence or disruption of private vehicular traffic. The U.S. Mission operated with reduced staffing, which included essential staff (transported by motor pool services) and employees who were able to walk or commute with private vehicles.

¶3. COMMENT: While the first day of a planned four-day "stay-away" caused a slow start to the workday of June 30, it did not lead to violence or an economic shut-down that many local observers had feared. According to Embassy sources, the Taxi Association and the GOL are engaged in a dialogue aimed at ending the strike action. As of COB, however, strike organizers remain committed to continuing the stay-away for a second day.
END COMMENT.

NOLAN